

DEAR SUBSCRIBER

On the Road Again

As you read this, we who are responsible for putting words in this space are somewhere in Switzerland or Austria or Germany. It is to be our longest trip, a full month. We flew to Zürich from Los Angeles on the new **Swiss Airlines** and from there drove to the Montreux-Vevey region on Lac Léman (Lake Geneva) where we rented a flat with a lake view.

Ground transport for the rest of the month will be a combination of car and train, but instead of the usual parade of hotels, vacation rentals in three or four different regions will be headquarters for short one to three-day forays.

For the first time, an issue of *Gemütlichkeit* will be written in Europe and transmitted from there to our printer/ mailing house. In fact, if you're on our email list (sign up at the website, www.gemut.com) we'll send you a few electronic postcards along the way. In addition, changes are in the works for our website and there is an outside possibility that during the trip we may be able to post regular reports, perhaps even pictures, to the website — emphasis on *outside* possibility.

We intend the trip to be more relaxed than our usual live-out-of-a-suitcase research sojourn where, in order to get as many stories for *Gemütlichkeit* as possible, we seldom light anywhere for longer than three

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GEMÜTLICHKEIT

The Travel Letter for Germany, Austria, Switzerland & the New Europe

SCHAFFHAUSEN

The Rhine is most famous as a German river. It's spectacular falls, however, are in Switzerland. See them and explore two fine medieval towns in the country's northernmost canton, Schaffhausen.

With an impressive 171 oriel windows, extensive rococo facades and eye-filling Renaissance frescos, Schaffhausen should be pulling in history and architecture-loving tourists in droves. It's not — yet.

_____ The Swiss city that
By Jim Johnson straddles the Rhine after it leaves Lake Constance, suffers from an identity crisis. For centuries, it was a way-station; first for freight that had to be off-loaded and transferred to wagons to portage the Rheinfall, later as a convenient overnight stop for early train passengers. Today, the city seems undecided whether to be a visitors' annex to nearby Stein am Rhein, the postcard-perfect medieval village, and to the

Rheinfall, Europe's mightiest waterfalls, or to show off its own considerable historic and architectural assets.

Happily and justifiably, the pendulum seems to be swinging toward self-pride.

Even local residents are joining tours to learn more about what their town was and can be. They start in Fronwagplatz, the former marketplace, and learn about the distinct architectural styles of the city's 12 former guild halls. They look at **Zum Goldenen Ochsen**, with its detailed frescos depicting scenes from Babylonian and Greek legends. They study the differences in the styles of oriels, the often ornate

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Swiss Family Destinations

Regarding an African safari, comedian Paul Lynde once said, "If the children don't hunt, there really isn't much for them."

Though he had no offspring, Mr. Lynde instinctively realized that the trick to traveling with kids is to find activities both they and you can enjoy. Here are two in Switzerland that ought to fill the bill.

Swiss Outdoor Museum

If, as your car or train speeds through the Swiss countryside, you wonder what it's like inside those massive combination house-barn structures, Ballenberg is for you.

The Swiss Open Air Museum, near Brienz at the east end of the Brienersee, is a collection of some 100 farm buildings, houses, barns, and mills, all fully operational, which have been carefully dismantled, brought to Ballenberg and reassembled. They have been collected from

all the Swiss cantons and the Ballenberg staff's reassembly and furnishing has been done with attention to the smallest detail. You don't just see a bare farmhouse bedroom, for example. It will be completely and authentically equipped. There will be shoes under the bed and clothes in the closet. The kitchen's table will be set and bread baking in the oven. The garden behind the house sprouts the same varieties of vegetables that grew in the farm garden of 1850.

In many buildings, Swiss artisans practice their crafts and on given days visitors can see weaving, spinning, bobbin lace making, wood carving, wool dyeing, tating, netting, and roof shingle making, among others. There is an alpine cheese dairy, a bakery, a charcoal works, a lime kiln, a small lumber mill, a

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nights. This luxury has become possible because our two chief reporters, Jim Johnson and Doug Linton, spent the end of summer roaming town and country searching out new sights, hotels and restaurants and seeing if old favorites are still up to snuff.

This is all good news for subscribers. For example, last month's lead story on Münster was written by Jim Johnson from his hotel room in Bonn just a few days after spending nearly a week in Münsterland.

Jim's itinerary during a seven-week August/September trip for us included Münster, Bonn, Trier, the Mosel Valley, Koblenz, the Rhine Valley, Heidelberg, Nürnberg, Freiburg im Breisgau, the Black Forest, the Bodensee (Lake Constance), Schaffhausen (Switzerland), Basel, Geneva, Zermatt, and Salzburg.

In the meantime, Doug Linton was in Munich last month checking out hotels. Ahead for him are visits to the Austrian wine town of Poysdorf, Krems, the Wachau valley, and a short trip across the Czech border to scope out a complex of old castles built by the Liechtensteins, one of which is a UNESCO World Heritage site. And sometime in the next few months Doug will file a story on happenings in his adopted home town of Vienna.

Add all this to what your editors uncover during the month of October and you're looking at a lot of solid,

up-to-date travel information coming your way over the next several months.

Clearing the Desk

• Last month's *Michelin Red Guide* story contained a typo. To clarify: Germany has five three-star, 14 two-star, 184 one-star and 375 "Bib Gourmand" restaurants. Switzerland has two three-star, 11 two-star, 81 one-star and 103 "Bib Gourmand" restaurants. You shouldn't go hungry.

• The U.S. Department of Commerce reported visits to Europe by Americans totaled 4.77 million in the October 2001-April 2002 period. That's a decline of 24.8% over the previous year. However, because of a reduction in capacity, flights this year have been full. The average load factor in June was 86.5% and 83.2% in July. Thus fares remained relatively high.

• On October 3, the **Brandenburg Gate** was to shed its Deutsche Telekom advertising canvas which for more than two years has hidden its 4.2 million euro restoration.

• Hotels either unaffected by the recent flooding or back in full operation are frantically sending press releases hoping to end a tourist drought. As the **Grand Hotel Zvon** in České Budějovice put it, "Unfortunately the clients are still afraid to travel to Czech Republic and cancel their trips. It has negative influence on hotel economics." The Zvon installed low season rates in September and a "category A" double with breakfast goes for \$64. A "grand suite" is \$85. České Budějovice is home to Budvar, one of the world's

great beers.

• **Jungfrau Railways' "Golden Autumn"** package includes five nights in Interlaken, Grindelwald, Wengen, Lauterbrunnen or Mürren and a pass on the Jungfrau Railways including a trip to the Jungfraujoch, Europe's highest rail station. Rates start at \$220 per person. Contact: tel. +41/0338/265 300, email: mail@interlaketourism.ch

• First there was the **Alte Pinakothek**, then the **Neue Pinakothek** and now Munich's new **Pinakothek der Moderne** opens this month. It will house four museums under one roof: the **State Gallery of Modern Art**; the **New Collection**, emphasizing industrial design, graphic design and applied art; the **Architectural Museum** and the **State Graphic Art Collection**. Pinakothek der Moderne, Barer Str. 40, email nehler@pinakothek.de, web www.pinakothek-der-moderne.de.— RHB

Using Gemütlichkeit

- Foreign currency prices are converted to U.S. dollars at the exchange rate in effect at the time of publication.
- Hotel prices listed are for one night. Discounts are often available for longer stays.
- All hotel prices include breakfast unless otherwise noted.
- Local European telephone area codes carry the "0" required for in-country dialing. To phone establishments from outside the country, such as from the USA, do not dial the first "0".

Logging on to our Website

Except for the most recent 12, back issues in text format from January 1993 are available free to subscribers only at <http://www.gemut.com> (click on "For Members Only"). To access the issues enter the user name and password published in this space each month. The June codes are:

User Name: **schaff** Password: **1492**

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HOTEL RESTAURANT RATING KEY

Rating Scale	Scale	Restaurant Criteria	Scale
Excellent	16 - 20	Food	65%
Above Average	12 - 15	Service	20%
Average	8 - 11	Atmosphere	15%
Adequate	4 - 7		
Unacceptable	0 - 3		
Hotel Rating Criteria	Value Rating	Hotel Scale	Scale
People/Service	30%	Outstanding Value	17 - 20
Location/Setting	15%	Very Good Value	12 - 16
Guestrooms	30%	Average Value	9 - 11
Public rooms	5%	Below Average Value	5 - 8
Facilities/Restaurant	20%	A Rip-Off	0 - 4

Special Designation

By virtue of location, decor, charm, warmth of management, or combination thereof, an especially pleasant establishment.

SCHAFFHAUSEN

Continued from page 1

bay windows that jut out from many buildings, and they relax and retreat in the courtyard garden or cloisters at **All Saint's**, an 11th-century Benedictine abbey.

At every turn, there's hidden treasure: from ornate plasterwork and devilish rainspouts to decorative 19th-century mailboxes and intricate wood-carved stairwells. In the entryway to a former monastery (now a library), baroque stone work is juxtaposed with blue neon sculpture overhead and in the floor. And above the town, the imposing **Munot Fortress** provides views to all directions, as the powerful bastion has for nearly five centuries.

Schaffhausen is also experiencing growth in the number of art galleries, studios and cafes, as well as an increase in the variety and quality of hotels and restaurants.

One-hour guided tours leave from the Schaffhausen Tourist Office on the Fronwagplatz at 2:30pm every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. Depending on the participants, they are conducted in German, French and/or English (CHF 12/\$8.40 for adults, CHF 6/\$4.20 for children).

Stein am Rhein

At Stein am Rhein, the point where the Rhine "officially" leaves the upper stretches of Lake Constance, it's an unfamiliar river — narrow, calm and teal, rather than the surging brown current of Bingen, Bacharach or Bonn. Boats are moored at river's edge, and stone stairs descend from half-timber homes into the water.

You can get a good feel for Stein am Rhein in less than two hours, although you'll need considerably more time if you stop in the many galleries and boutiques, enjoy a meal on the river, or climb 190 meters (575 feet) above town through vineyards to the **Hohenklingen Fortress**. From the fortress tower, the view extends over the town and into vineyards and farmland. The town square is almost too much for the eye. In three directions, painted facades on 15th-century

Schaffhausen Basics

Population: 280,000

Elevation: 404 meters/1,250 feet

Tourist Information:

Rheinfall-Tourismus, CH-8220 Neuhausen am Rheinfall, tel +41 052 6727455, web www.rheinfall.ch.

Schaffhausen Tourist Office, Fronwagplatz 4, CH-8200 Schaffhausen, tel +41 052 625 5141, fax +41 052 625 5143, email info@schaffhausen-tourismus.ch, web www.schaffhausen-tourismus.ch

Stein am Rhein Tourism, Oberstadt 3, CH-8260 Stein am Rhein, tel +41 052 742 2090, fax +41 052 742 2091, email tourist-service@steinamrhein.ch, web www.steinamrhein.ch

Driving Distances:

Basel	130 km	80 miles
Constance	56 km	35 miles
Frankfurt	365 km	227 miles
Freiburg	96 km	160 miles
Geneva	322 km	200 miles
Munich	309 km	192 miles
Zürich	50 km	31 miles

Principal Rail Links: Stuttgart-Schaffhausen-Zürich-Milan; Basel-Schaffhausen-Lindau

Nearest Airport: Zürich (about 30 min.)

buildings fill the view. The fourth side is dominated by the 16th-century Rathaus.

Unfortunately, many visitors will not stray far from the town square, which should be just the starting point for a visit. As one of its 3,000 residents put it, "In Stein am Rhein, you have to keep looking behind the curtain." The best parts of the town are indeed elusive, but take the advice to look "behind the curtain," as Stein am Rhein is still very much a living city. A peek into the 14th-century Fronhof, for instance, a small courtyard lined with half-timber houses, will reveal the sounds of kids shouting and playing, the aroma of the evening's dinner, and the sights of drying laundry — perhaps the curtain is best left as is.

But an aware walker will find colorful gardens, intricately carved doors, dragon rain gutters, metal rods that served as medieval doorbells, and dramatic frescos throughout the village. On the river, long fishing skiffs make their frequent trips to cast nets and lines.

The Rhine promenade leads upstream to the well-preserved, millennium-old **St. George Monastery**. At

what looks like a dead end, just past a sweeping willow tree, a low passageway cuts through the cloister wall, where a museum offers a fine view of town history and culture.

The best way to reach Stein am Rhein from Schaffhausen is by boat. It's about two hours in each direction, along quiet waters past vineyards, farmland and forest. Boats leave approximately every two hours from the Rhine pier. For those in a hurry, trains leave the Schaffhausen and Stein am Rhein railway stations every half-hour. The 11-mile rail trip takes about 25 minutes (with stops). From the Stein am Rhein station, it's a five-minute walk to the Rhine and across into the village. (You can also go one way by boat, the other by train.)

Rheinfall

It's an even quicker trip from Schaffhausen to the **Rheinfall**, Europe's largest waterfall. Just jump on Bus 1, direction Neuhausen (departs from the side closest to the train station), and in about seven minutes the recorded announcement will alert in English that it's the Rheinfall stop.

Alighting from the bus, you feel cool air wafting from the falls. Follow the signs from the bus to the top of the falls, about five minutes by foot. The sight is — quite simply — breathtaking. Stairs and paths lead to the base of the falls and to a promenade along the somewhat quieted river. From there, you can watch the full power of the Rhine force its way through three jagged gorges formed where the river broke through rock on its fight northward. One-hundred-fifty meters (450 feet) wide, the falls plunge 23 meters (70 feet) down a series of ledges and form intimidating standing waves and roaring froth.

Other vantage points present stunning views. Across the river (reached by bridge or boat), a path leads to the base of the falls and actually extends *into* the falls, a seemingly precarious platform a few feet above the froth. More adventurous sorts can board a boat that shuttles them to the largest ledge between the gorges (CHF 6.50 adults, CHF 3.50 children; \$4.50/\$2.50). While the boat floats in the calm of an eddy, the passengers

scramble onto the rock and clamber up a series of walkways to a slight promontory, the water roaring on both sides. Boat tours are also available for a simple round trip right up to the falls (same price as the shuttle). Even 30 meters (90 feet) from the falls, a wall of mist hits the passengers. At 10 meters (30 feet) away, the boat shudders against the current and bobs in the waves. (Rheinfall Boat Tours Rhyfall-Mändli, Postfach 25, CH-8212 Neuhausen am Rheinfall, tel. +41/052/672 4811, fax 672 4948, email info@maendli.ch, web www.maendli.ch.)

Twice an hour, a bus runs from the base of the falls back to the railway station.

The best deal for getting around Schaffhausen, the Rheinfall, Stein am Rhein and to the near sides of Constance and Basel is the "FlexTax-Tageskarte" daily transit pass. For CHF 17 for adults and CHF 10 for children (\$11/\$7), the pass gives one-day access to all trains and buses. For the boat to Stein am Rhein, add CHF 10 for adults, CHF 6 for kids (\$7/\$4). The passes are available at all train stations, at bus stop automats, and on buses. Public transit is excellent, with frequent and clean buses and trains.

Accommodations

Hotel Bahnhof

A century ago, seven hotels greeted travelers emerging from the Schaffhausen train station. One remains: the privately-owned Hotel Bahnhof, in the fourth generation of the same family. The four-star hotel consists of 52 well-appointed rooms spread across four buildings built between 1798 and 1954. Given its location across the street from the station and adjacent to the old city, it's not surprising that nearly 80 percent of the hotel's guests are walk-ins.

Though privately owned, the hotel is affiliated with Best Western. Guest rooms are spacious with pleasant, if not elegant, surroundings. Upper stories provide views of the narrow streets of the old city and of the Munot Fortress. Windows are double- or triple-glazed, depending on location, to reduce or eliminate street noise.

Contact: Hotel Bahnhof, Bahnhofstrasse 46, CH-8201 Schaffhausen, tel +41/052/624 1924, fax 624 7479, email mail@hotelbahnhof.ch, web www.hotelbahnhof.ch

Daily Rates: Singles CHF 150-185 (\$100-123), doubles CHF 230-270 (\$154-180), suites CHF 350 (\$233). Garage parking is CHF 14 (\$9).

Rating: QUALITY 13/20, VALUE 14/20

Hotel Kronenhof

Built in 1414 as a private dwelling, the Kronenhof became a hostelry in 1489 and later became one of the best-known inns along the upper Rhine. Even Goethe spent the night, or so the story goes. Extensive renovations completed in 2000 kept as much of the original architecture as possible — and eliminated all remnants of 1970s renovations.

Of the 40 guestrooms, Number 402 (shower only) is a delightful double with an ample balcony with a view of the castle and vineyards. Number 413 (bath and shower) features a balcony over the peaceful courtyard. One nice touch: an ironing room for guests.

Contact: Hotel Kronenhof, Kirchhofplatz 7, CH-8201 Schaffhausen, tel +41/052/635 7575, fax 635 7565, email info@kronenhof.ch, web www.kronenhof.ch

Daily Rates: Singles CHF 130 (\$87), doubles CHF 140-160 (\$94-\$107)

Rating: QUALITY 12/20 VALUE 13/20

Hotel Park Villa

Although it's barely 400 meters (1,225 feet) from the railway station, the Hotel Park Villa feels miles away, thanks to its location in a beautiful wooded park overlooking the city. The hotel was built in 1900 as a private home by a Hungarian merchant who told his architect to spare no expense. The result is a five-story *Jugendstil* villa with a somewhat over-the-top design and with towers and chimneys as crooked and whimsical as the headwear of the "Cat in the Hat." Inside, it's a step back 100 years, thanks in great part to the abundance of furniture, statues and decorations that the original owner brought from a Hungarian castle, and to the creativity, dedication and antique-finding skills of Max Schlumpf,

the villa's soft-spoken but animated owner.

In the evening, many guests relax with cognac and pastries in the Schlossbar, a distinctive early 1900s salon with antique lamps and furniture. Others sit outside in the gardens, conversing by torchlight. In the morning, they gather for breakfast under a massive chandelier and park themselves firmly in hand-carved chairs with period upholstery.

The Park Villa offers a range of 27 rooms, from cramped singles to the deluxe former bedroom (room 17) of the villa's first owner, complete with hand-carved 1827 four-poster bed, parquet floors, Persian rug, ample antiques and a private oriel with a view to the rear. Most rooms fall somewhere in between. Room 19, for example, is huge, with a private balcony and spacious bathroom. It's best to discuss preferences with Schlumpf, who has a long track record of finding the right rooms for his guests.

Contact: Hotel Park Villa, Parkstrasse 18, CH-8200 Schaffhausen, tel +41/052/625 2737, fax 625 1253, email hotel@parkvilla.ch, web www.parkvilla.ch.

Daily Rates: Single with shared bath CHF 78-98 (\$52-66), single with private bath CHF 149-169 (\$100-113), double with shared bath CHF 130 (\$87), double with private bath CHF 179-229 (\$119-153), suites CHF 249-308 (\$166-205). Free parking.

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 16/20

Villa Iris

Villa Iris is a work of love that Gaby and Piewo Rudin have made their life. The 1897 *Jugendstil* home had fallen into disrepair when the couple bought it. Much of the original structure and adornments remain: ironwork, windows, a functioning *Kachelofen* (tile oven), marble floors and rosette ceilings. But even more of Villa Iris results from Piewo's abilities as a painter and sculptor and from Gaby's knack of finding just the right pieces to make this house a home away from home. Evidence of Piewo's work is everywhere, from straightforward renovation to painstaking painting and plasterwork. They're

EDITOR'S CHOICE

the perfect match to Gaby's finds, like art deco lamps, Chinese lions at the doorway ("for good luck"), faucets with swan-shaped spouts, and her extensive collection of antique dolls.

Guestrooms are huge and filled with antiques and the Rudins' personal touches. (All rooms also have private toilet and bath and/or shower.) Number 4 has an antique marble fireplace, an ornate rosette ceiling, and a view to the hills. Room 7 has a large wooden balcony with wrought-iron railings and view to the backyard, a *Kachelofen*, a Jacuzzi tub set in marble, a working fireplace framed in bronze andirons from an old French castle, and wallpaper Gaby found in England and carried home. Number 1 is on the ground floor and entered through 200-year-old doors with their original locks. The 250-year-old carved wooden farmer's closet stands across from a massive bed. Number 5 is in Louis XVI style, with original period pieces, with Gaby's stuffed animal collection across the top of a closet and antique handbags on the bookshelves.

Despite the comfort of the rooms, most guests wander outdoors to find a quiet place to read, chat or doze — perhaps by the small lily-pond stocked with carp and goldfish. The villa is a 10-minute walk from the train station and three minutes from the #6 bus. There's free parking in front of the house.

Contact: Villa Iris, Eigerstrasse 17, CH-8200 Schaffhausen, tel./fax +41/052/6256550

Daily Rates: Singles CHF 100 (\$67), doubles CHF 140 (\$93)

Rating: QUALITY: 16/20, VALUE 17/20

Hotel Zunfthaus zum Rüden

The Hotel Zunfthaus is one of Schaffhausen's dozen elaborate guildhalls, built 280 years ago by the city's food merchants. Many of the public spaces are elegant, like the stunning ballroom with parquet floors, detailed stucco and dazzling chandelier, and the grand staircase with its original wood and stone landings.

History is evident in guestrooms as well, with many wood beams and stone walls. All are spacious and

straightforward, with the expected conveniences (showers only).

Until its remodeling in 1999, the hotel was a meeting facility, and today the majority of guests are still business people. Only fifth-floor rooms are high enough to look out over the rooftops of the city, and Number 506 is the only double on the floor. On the third floor, both Numbers 301 and 302 provide views of the Munot fortress, as well as of adjacent half-timber buildings. All rooms are nonsmoking. It's ideally situated in the pedestrian zone just a two-minute walk from the rail station.

Contact: Hotel Zunfthaus zum Rüden, Oberstadt 20, CH-8201 Schaffhausen, tel +41 052 632 3636, fax 632 3637, email info@rueden.ch, web www.rueden.ch

Daily Rates: Single CHF 145 (\$97), double CHF 220-250 (\$147-167). Some weekend discounts.

Rating: QUALITY 14/20, VALUE 14/20

Hotel Chlosterhof

While the hotel itself is beautiful, the external architecture — jagged glazed-brick walls — clashes with Stein am Rhein's old town, which starts just across the street. Perhaps it was the excess of the 1980s, when it was built, or an expression of Scandinavian design by its Danish owner, but it's a visual assault on the quiet village. Most guests, however, don't come for the history. The hotel is used primarily by business people, who generally appreciate its private bar, sauna, swimming pool, fitness center and gourmet restaurant (on a terrace overlooking the river).

The hotel's 71 rooms are modern and spacious (all at least 35 square meters/290 square feet), with all the amenities. All have balconies, but only suites have Rhine views. Furnishings are rustic, but elegant. Mahogany furniture in the bedrooms and marble floors in the bathrooms help lend a historic feeling, as do the four-poster beds in 10 of the rooms.

Contact: Hotel Chlosterhof, CH-8260 Stein am Rhein, tel +41 052 7424242, fax +41 052 7411337, email chlosterhof@bluewin.ch, web www.chlosterhof.ch

Daily Rates: Singles CHF 220-250

(\$147-167), doubles CHF 270-310 (\$180-207), suites CHF 450-550 (\$300-367). Parking is CHF 12 (\$8).

Rating: QUALITY 16/20, VALUE 12/20

Hotel Rheinfels

For most of its 400-year history, the Rheinfels in Stein am Rhein has been a customs house, a warehouse and a guild house. Today, it's an unpretentious, clean and pleasant hotel with a super location immediately at the Rhine. The 17 rooms are decorated simply but pleasantly. Unless someone has an extended interest in Stein am Rhein, the hotels of Schaffhausen offer greater variety and services. However, it's extremely tempting to book the Rösli suite, which has a superb view of the Rhine and the homes on the left bank.

Contact: Hotel Rheinfels, CH-8260 Stein am Rhein, tel +41 052 741 2144, fax +41 052 741 2522, email rheinfels@bluewin.ch, web www.rheinfels.ch

Daily Rates: Single CHF 130 (\$87), doubles CHF 180 (\$120). Rösli suite with private terrace on Rhine: single CHF 190 (\$127), double CHF 250 (\$167).

Rating: QUALITY 11/20 VALUE 13/20

Sustenance

Café Badstube Restaurant

In a 15th-century former bathhouse near the ship landing, guests can sit in old tubs converted to booths and look at painted scenes of men and women in their weekly (or monthly) ritual of bathing and scrubbing. The dining areas were nicely renovated earlier this year, but a solid sense of history remains: sturdy beams, original stonework visible through plaster walls, leaded glass in the windows, and a 1630 price list for bathing (that will be three *kreuzen* for bath and shampoo, please). Guests can also dine outside, either in a small courtyard under the Witches' Tower or on a terrace between the town's defensive wall and the Rhine promenade.

Service is prompt, friendly and multilingual, and the overall dining experience is relaxed and pleasant.

Prices are reasonable, especially by Swiss standards, with few items topping CHF 20 (\$14). Fresh fish from

Lake Constance and the Rhine are specialties, as is *Rösti*, the traditional hash browns, served here discus-size in a black skillet. Among the many varieties, the *Urschweiz* is especially flavorful, with ham, cheese and fresh mushrooms. For CH 7 (\$5), you can add a trip to an ample and fresh salad bar.

Contact: Café Badstube Restaurant, bei der Schiffflände, CH-8260 Stein am Rhine, tel. +41 052 741 2093, fax 741 5114, email badstube@badstube.ch, web www.badstube.ch

Rating: QUALITY 12/20 VALUE 13/20

Schlössli Vörth

The Schlössli Vörth, a tiny palace built on a rock promontory jutting into a basin about 100 feet downstream of the Rheinfall, offers the likes of risotto with wild mushrooms, pan-fried trout with scallions and beurre blanc, and imaginative desserts — coupled with a perfect vantage point for one of Europe’s most glorious natural sights.

Entrees average about CHF 18-20 (\$12-\$13), especially reasonable given the location. Call ahead and reserve a table next to the long row of windows facing the falls. While sipping local wine, having lunch, or savoring a rhubarb tart, you can enjoy a stunning panorama.

Contact: Schlössli Vörth, CH-8212 Neuhausen am Rheinfall, tel +41 052 672 4221, fax 672 2430, email info@schloessliworth.ch, web www.schloessliworth.ch

Rating: QUALITY 15/20 VALUE 15/20

Restaurant Schützenstube

From outside, the Schützenstube’s fountains, gables and decorative facade are interesting and inviting.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Inside is just as inviting, from the relaxed, upbeat atmosphere, rustic setting and friendly, fast service to the variety and quality of cuisine.

Choices include beef carpaccio with wasabi sauce, breast of duck in honey-sesame sauce, banana curry and lemon grass on basmati rice, and wild mushroom risotto.

Entrees are in the CHF 19-24 (\$13-16) price range with some creative salads at CHF 14-18 (\$9-12). Most guests were regulars, and the chef

came out and chatted. In winter, the restaurant presents variety shows, which explains the stage, curtain and spotlights.

Contact: Restaurant Schützenstube’s, Schützengraben 27, CH-8200 Schaffhausen, tel +41 052 625 4249, fax 624 3719, web www.schuetzenstube.ch

Rating: QUALITY 14/20 VALUE 14/20

Zum Frieden

The oldest restaurant in Schaffhausen, Zum Frieden offers two dining experiences: a casual one in the rustic downstairs “Stube” and a more formal one in upstairs rooms. Each has a separate menu, but only the upstairs menu is displayed outside.

Although the Stube was empty and the upstairs nearly so, the waiter refused to serve an “upstairs” appetizer in the Stube. It was either choose from the high-priced snack menu downstairs or to head upstairs, where a larger hunger and broader budget might have appreciated choices like lamb medallion provençale, calves liver with risotto, and veal steak, priced from CHF 28-40 (\$20-28).

Upstairs one finds rose petals strewn on starched white tablecloths and place settings fit for royalty, while “below decks” the scene was more rustic and, once the ordered salad was delivered, devoid of service. The upper restaurant surely offers better food and service, but ratings are based on actual experience.

Contact: Zum Frieden, Herrenache 11, CH-8201 Schaffhausen, tel +41 052 6254715

Rating: QUALITY 8/20 VALUE 5/20

FAMILY

Continued from page 1

blacksmith shop, and an historical drug store. You can observe clock-making, milk being made into butter, and one exhibit entitled “At the Hairdresser in Days of Old.”

As you pass through the kitchens of the old farm houses you may be offered a bite of something that has been cooked there using an historic recipe. The museum also keeps a few rare animals among its collection of about 250, including peacock goats, Appenzell crested chickens and some strange looking woolly-haired pigs. In

one corner of the park is a garden of medicinal herbs used in times past, and even sometimes today to treat various ailments.

The museum’s buildings are scattered throughout the 200-acre site above the Brienersee. The paths connecting them wind through gentle hills, groves of trees and past outcroppings of rock. You’ll have to do some walking to see Ballenberg but nothing strenuous, and many of the buildings are designed for easy wheelchair access. Allocate at least three hours. However, those with a special interest in architecture or Swiss country life over the past 200 years may wish to spend as many as three days.

At lunchtime, many visitors take advantage of the park’s picnic area. Smoked sausage, cheese and fresh bread are available from various Ballenberg shops or there are three restaurants: **Wilerhorn** at the eastern entrance, **Alter Bären** at the west entrance or, inside the park about 25 minutes walk from the entrances, is **Zum Alten Degen**.

Ballenberg is open daily from mid-April through October, 10am-5pm.

Prices: adults CHF 16 (\$11), children 6 to 16 CHF 8 (\$5.50), families (parents with their children from 6 to 16 years) CHF 35 (\$24). Ballenberg is free to holders of the Swiss Museum Pass, which covers 275 museums throughout Switzerland. The one-month **Swiss Museum Pass** is CHF 30 (\$20) for adults and the **Swiss Museum Plus Pass** costs CHF 35 (\$23) and covers entry for one adult and up to five children under 16.

Swiss Open-Air Museum in Ballenberg, Postfach, 3855 Brienz, tel. +41/033/ 952 1030, fax 952 1039, email info@ballenberg.ch.

H. Huggler-Wyss Woodcarving Factory

Near Ballenberg, the lakeside village of Brienz is the center of the country’s small but still vital woodcarving industry. Aspiring carvers come from throughout the country to attend the Cantonal Woodcarver School and the region is recognized as the birthplace of Swiss woodcarving.

Even travelers with no special

interest or knowledge of this rare craft will be fascinated by a short tour of H. Huggler-Wyss, a Brienz manufacturer of wood sculptures and Switzerland's leading producer of hand-carved figures.


The firm's little three-story building provides workbenches and good light for 18 to 20 of the country's most skillful carvers who quietly turn out hand-carved pieces ranging in size from one or two inches to life-sized statues, mostly from linden, a wood which takes three years to cure, has a fine grain and stains well.

Some artisans have unique skills or techniques and the company constantly searches for others who can be trained to ensure the art is not lost. Carving faces, say those who know, is a special talent that greatly diminishes when the artisan stops working at his craft even for just a few months. What they produce we find to be of far more interest and artistic merit than the mass-produced-by-many-hands Hummel figurines.

Huggler-Wyss accepts special orders. The charge for a small carving of a family pet will be approximately \$140 to \$200. A life-size statue of a person can cost as much as \$15,000.

To arrange a visit, contact the company by regular mail or email.

H. Huggler-Wyss, Fischerbrunnenplatz CH-3855 Brienz, Switzerland, tel. +41/033/952 1000, fax 952 10 01, email info@huggler-woodcarvings.ch

Other kid-friendly activities in this area include the ride up the **Schnyge Platte Railway** for a walk through the **Alpine Garden** with its many rare plants, the **funicular and cog railway** to Mürren from Lauterbrunnen, a **boat ride on the lake** or the funicular from Brienz to the **Rothorn**. 

Readers' Forum

Northern Germany Hotels

I recently returned from a month in Germany, and want you to know how much I appreciated the hotel information found on your website. In particular, the **Hotel Prem** in Hamburg was a wonderful discovery. The moment I arrived, a young woman from the front office came outside to greet me and see if I needed assis-

tance. Once inside, I found the manager, Mr. Tobias Flor, extremely helpful and understanding. In the days that followed, the staff (from the manager to the housekeeper) greeted me by name.

In addition to very nice accommodations, the two restaurants were also outstanding. Of all the meals I ate in restaurants during my stay in Germany, the five-course dinner at **La Mer** was by far the best. What made it even more enjoyable was the fact that the woman who manages the restaurants displayed an amazing combination of hospitality and efficiency. Everything ran like clockwork, yet her warmth and attentiveness made me feel like I was a dinner guest in her home. This was also true of the waiters, which tells me that a lot of extra effort has gone into training the staff. I could go on and on, but suffice it to say that your recommendation was right on target, and I am grateful to have such a reliable guide to go by as I plan future trips.

A couple of other discoveries to pass along. In Bad Doberan, near Rostock, I found the **Romantik Hotel Friedrich-Franz Palais** (Am Kamp, D-18209, tel. +49/038203/63036, fax 62126, email friedrich-franz-palais@romantikhotels.com) quite pleasant and reasonably priced; the restaurant is very good. One nice thing about the location, besides the beauty of the place itself and the amazing church, is its proximity to Rostock/Warnemünde — without the business and noise of the city.

Even less likely to be on a traveler's itinerary (but worth the trip) is the town of Güstrow. The **Schlosshotel Güstrow** (Schlossberg 1, D-18273 Güstrow, tel. +49/03843/7670, fax 767 100, email schlosshotel-guestrow@t-online.de) is a pleasant and very up-to-date hotel. Besides being reasonably priced and very well-run, the hotel is right across the street from the palace (now a museum) and only a few blocks from the information office and the two main churches; the Ernst Barlach museum is a few blocks further, but also within walking distance. Interestingly enough, before reunification this hotel was actually a prison. What a change! The restaurant is also quite

good and reasonably priced, with a bit of an emphasis on Italian cuisine.

I hope this is useful in your search for places to recommend. Thank you again for the tips I received from your fine publication.

REV. WILLIAM S. MARTENS
RICHLAND, WA

Recommends Top Restaurants

Would you believe food is one of Europe's best attractions? See if you can match these restaurants in America. My wife thinks Wolfgang Puck's **Spago** in Beverly Hills comes close.

First, in Switzerland and definitely off the beaten path is Georges Wenger's **Hotel de la Gare** (2 Rue de La Gare, CH-2340 Le Noirmont, tel. +41/032/953 1110) located in the Jura not far from France. One room and two suites (how luxurious they are) located right over the restaurant. The food? Probably the best in Switzerland. Near the end of dinner both Mr. and Mrs. Wenger mingled with the crowd who it appeared were all most satisfied. We stayed two nights and sampled four different meals. All were superb. For us it was as good or better than a French Michelin three-star, need more be said?

Second, in Germany, **Johann Lafer's Stromberg** (Schlossberg 1, D-55442, Stromberg Kreis Kreuznach, Rhineland-Palatinate, tel. +49/06724/93100, fax 931 090, email stromburghotel@johannlafer.de). Our introduction to this fine restaurant came by means of a taxi driver. First he volunteered that most people come in their own cars, very nice cars. Second, he yielded his opinion, "It is thought to be the finest German restaurant." Well, we were there and we agree. Every last course was scrumptious. Why elaborate? Johann Lafer has it. Another as good or better than a French Michelin three-star.

Third in Germany is **Alpenhof Murnau** (Ramschstrasse 8 D-82418 Murnau, tel. +49/08841/4910, fax 491100, email info@aplenhof-murnau.com), about an hour south of Munich in the so-called Lake Country. The food is excellent in every respect, however not so pompous as the above two restaurants. It was a very pleasant stop in Bavaria between Munich and Austria.

READERS' FORUM

Continued from page 1

All three are associated with **Re-lais & Chateaux**, 800-735-2478.

ALBERT FIEDLER
CAMARILLO CA

Vacation Rental Memories

The article on apartment rentals in the July issue brought back memories.

My husband retired from Lockheed Aircraft in early 1977 and we were a year planning for this event since we expected to spend six months in Europe, most of them in Switzerland.

On a previous trip I visited a real estate agency in Ascona in the canton Ticino. When the time came I contacted them about renting an apartment for one month. They offered several choices and we selected the one. No deposit was required and when we arrived in Ascona on a Sunday, we picked up the keys left for us at a local hotel. It was a beautiful apartment with all amenities at a rate of CHF 30 per day!

Our next stop was Lake Lucerne. I had requested brochures on several apartments which the tourist office sent very promptly. I first eliminated those that did not meet our needs. Then I corresponded with four of the apartment owners all of whom provided necessary details. One in partic-

Key Websites for the Traveler

- www.gemut.com Gateway site for travelers to Germanic Europe, including car rental, rail passes, hotel bookings, traveler feedback, travel tips and past issues (free access to back issues for subscribers; see log-on info on page 2).
- www.viamichelin.com The Michelin database of hotels and restaurants plus great interactive trip planning tools.
- www.travelgearnow.com Guidebooks, maps, travel accessories, name-brand luggage, all at 10% off for subscribers.
- www.mapblast.com Map and automobile trip planning. Locates routes and distances.
- bahn.hafas.de/bin/query.exe/en German rail. Train schedules throughout Europe, not just Germany.
- www.sbb.ch/index_e.htm Swiss and European rail schedules.
- www.ski-europe.com Top web resource for skiers with much data on Alpine resorts.
- www.myswitzerland.com Website of Switzerland's national tourist authority.
- www.germany-tourism.de Germany's national tourist authority.
- www.anto.com Austria's national tourist authority.
- <http://www.hhog.de> Website for an alliance of historic German cities.

ular appealed to us. The owner gave detailed descriptions, enclosed postcards of the village and specified the "do's and don't's." We selected that one and again no deposit was required. The apartment was in the small town of Vitznau at the foot of the Rigi Mountain, a half-hour by boat or car from Lucerne. It was a lovely place, bedroom, living room, kitchen, bath and balcony facing Lake Lucerne and the mountains. What could be better! Except the rent which was \$12 a day! Unbelievable. We spent three months there and returned again a couple of years later for a two-week stay. The owner even provided sheets and towels (new and still packaged in the store covers) since I explained it would be too difficult for us to ship all that from the US.

We were fortunate to find two such ideal accommodations because, once we were there, we looked at other properties and many would not have met our standards.

So much for reminiscing. Keep up the good work.

SUSI E. KANUCH
VENTURA CA

In Praise of Austria

We have just returned from a wonderful trip to Austria. We thoroughly enjoyed Vienna, Dürnstein, Linz, and Innsbruck. All are lovely cities with beautiful old towns to enjoy. (We didn't make it to Melk, deciding instead to spend a third night in Innsbruck, a fascinating old medieval city in spite of all the organized tour groups.)

Then there was the beautiful little city of Steyr, which was certainly one of the highlights of our trip. We were happy to see when we returned that you had included it in your May issue as a "hidden treasure." We couldn't agree more.

The hotel accommodations were outstanding at every stop, especially at your two Editor's Choices (the **Altstadt** in Vienna and the **Mader** in Steyr). In fact, when we returned to Vienna for our last night, we found that the Altstadt had upgraded us from the double room with an extra bed that we had reserved to the owner's suite, at no additional charge.

THE DAYHOFF FAMILY

VIA EMAIL 

We Recommend

This listing of good value, mid-priced hotels in popular destination cities is a new *Gemütlichkeit* feature intended for quick reference. We'd like to know if you find it useful. Additional hotels and links to websites of these hotels can be found in the Archives section of our website at www.gemut.com. The required subscriber user name and password for access this month can be found on page 2 herein. The hotels are arranged in price order, higher to lower.

Berlin

Hotel Art Nouveau, Leibnizstr. 59, tel. +49/030/327 7440, fax 327 744 40, email hotelartnouveau@snafu.de

Hotel Domus, Uhländstrasse 49, Germany D-10719, tel. +49/030/882041, fax 882 0410, email: info@hotel-domus-berlin.de

Bern

Hotel Innere Enge, Engestrasse 54, CH-3012, tel. +41/031/309 6111, fax 309 6112, email: info@zghotels.ch

Hotel Kreuz, Zeughausgasse 41, CH-3000, tel. +41/031/329 9595, fax 329 95 96, email: hotelkrenz@swissonline.ch

Lausanne

Hostellerie du Débarcadère, 7 chemin du Cret, Saint Sulpice, CH-102, tel. +41/021/691 5747, fax 691 5079, email: debarcadere@swissonline.ch (not in town)

Hotel Agora, Av. du Rond-Point 9, CH-1006, Tel. +41/021/617 1211, fax 616 2605, email: agora@fhotels.ch

Lucerne

Hotel Wilden Mann, Bahnhofstrasse 30, CH-6000 Luzern, tel. +41/041/2101666, fax 2101629, email: mail@wilden-mann.ch

Hotel Cascada, Bundesplatz 18, CH-6003 Lucerne, tel: +41/041/226 80 88, fax 226 80 00, Email: info@cascada.ch

Munich

Hotel Asam, Josephspitalstrasse 3, tel. +49/089/230 9700, fax 230 970 97, email: info@hotel-asam.de.

Hotel Kraft, Schillerstr. 49, tel. +49/089/594823-24 fax 5503856, email kraft.hotel@t-online.de

Rothenburg ob der Tauber

Reichs-Küchenmeister, Kirchplatz 8, Rothenburg o.d. Tauber, Germany D-91541, tel. +49/09861/97 00, fax 97 04 09, email: hotel@reichskuechenmeister.com

Salzburg

Hotel Struber, Nonntaler Hauptstrasse 35, Austria A-5020 tel. +43/0662/843 728, fax 843 728 8, email: struber@sbg.at

Hotel Jedermann, Rupertgasse 25, Austria A-5020, tel. +43/0662/873241-0, fax 873241-9, email: jedermann@salzburginfo.or.at

Vienna

Hotel Römischer Kaiser, Annagasse 16, A-1010, tel +43/01/512 77 51 0, fax 512 77 51 13, email: info@rkhotel.bestwestern.com

Allstadt Vienna, Kirchengasse 41, tel. +43/01/526 3399-0, fax 523 4901, email: hotel@alstadt.at, web: www.alstadt.at

Pension Aviano, Marco-D'Aviano-Gasse 1, tel. +43/01/512 8330, fax 512 8330 6, email: aviano@pertschy.com

Zürich

Hotel Florhof, Florhofgasse 4, Switzerland CH-8001, tel.41/01/216 4470, fax 261 4611, email: info@florhof.ch

Hotel Arlette, Stampfenbachstrasse 26, Switzerland CH-8001, tel. +41/01/25 20 032, fax 25 20 932

Frankfurt Airport

Steigenberger Esprit Hotel Frankfurt Airport, CargoCity Süd, D-60549, tel. +49/069/69 70 99, fax 69 70 94 44, email: frankfurt@esprit-hotels.de

Hotel Birkenhof, von-Eiff-Str 37, Hanau-Steinheim, D-63456, tel. +49/06181/648 80, fax 64 88 39, email: info@HotelBirkenhof.de (25-minute drive from airport)

Hotel Dreieich, Frankfurter Str. 49, Langen, D-63225, tel. +49/06103/91 50, fax 52 030 (15-minute drive from airport)

Munich Airport

Kempinski Hotel Airport, Terminalstrasse/Mitte 20, D-85356 Munich, tel. +49/089/9782-0, fax 97822610, info@kempinski-airport.de

Hotel Hoyacker Hof, Freisinger Landstrasse 9a, D-85748 Garching b. München, tel. +49/089/326 9900, fax 320 7243, email: info@hoyackerhof.de

Zürich Airport

Mövenpick Zürich Airport, Walter-Mittelholzerstrasse 8, CH-8152 Glattbrugg, tel. +41/01/808 88 88, fax 808 88 77, email: hotel@movenpick-zurich-airport.ch

Hotel Fly Away, Marktgasse 19, Zürich-Kloten, Switzerland CH-8302, tel. +41/01/804 4455, fax 804 44 50, email: reservation@hotel-flyaway.ch